

On Friday, June 10, 2011, I welcomed 10 members of the Congressional Black Caucus to Connecticut's First Congressional District for a historic discussion on race and social justice. The "Call to Action" Forum took place at the Bushnell Theatre and was hosted by the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center as part of their celebration of the 200th anniversary of Stowe's birth.

The discussion focused on three key policy areas: education, health care, and economic well-being. Panelists talked about overcoming inequalities both throughout the country and specifically here in Connecticut. Connecticut has one of the largest achievement gaps in education between minority and non-minority students and access to health care remains out of reach for too many.

U.S. Rep. Donald Payne, D-NJ, said, "Race is really something that people don't want to talk about. We as a nation need to be honest about ourselves and really admit that there indeed have been stumbling blocks. We could make them stepping stones, but if we don't discuss it, if we don't talk about it honestly, we're going to be back to where we were" ([Hartford Courant](#)).

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What people are saying about the event

From *Hartford Courant*

As part of its namesake's 200th birthday celebration, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center hosted an interactive discussion Friday on a variety of race-related issues including the achievement gap, economic and health disparities.

"We think the promise of America has not been fulfilled," said Katherine Kane, executive director of the Stowe Center.

The goal of the morning's four panels was to create a new call to action for America that Kane said would be "deployed around the country to demonstrate in Hartford what our leaders are doing."

These leaders consisted of veteran politicians such as U.S. Rep. John Larson from Connecticut's 1st District, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, professionals in Hartford's school system and members of Larson's Congressional Youth Cabinet.

"The soon-to-be experts, the students, did an extraordinary job," said U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill.

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From *CT News Junkie*

Curtis Robinson had health insurance when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1997 and he survived. But the Hartford businessman said he watched too many others die because they didn't have access to care.

Since that time he has put up \$1 million of his own funds and co-founded the Men's Health Institute at Saint Francis Hospital.

Robinson, who is on the board of directors at Saint Francis, said that too often African American men without health insurance die of prostate cancer because they don't get treatment until it's far too late.

Robinson made those remarks Friday at the Bushnell Theater in Hartford where U.S. Rep. John Larson, D-1st, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus met to talk about health care disparities and other social justice issues.

Health care disparities have been part of the civil rights fight since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s days when King himself said, "Of all forms of injustice, inequality in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

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